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Brooklyn's 81st Precinct probed by NYPD for fudging stats; felonies allegedly marked as misdemeanors

BY ROCCO PARASCANDOLA / DAILY NEWS POLICE BUREAU CHIEF / Monday, February 1, 2010, 9:37 PM

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A Brooklyn precinct is under investigation for manipulating statistics to make its cops look like better crimefighters, the Daily News has learned.

Two probes are centered around whether Bedford-Stuyvesant's 81st Precinct recorded felonies as misdemeanors and refused to take complaints from victims - all in an effort to drive down the crime rate, sources said.

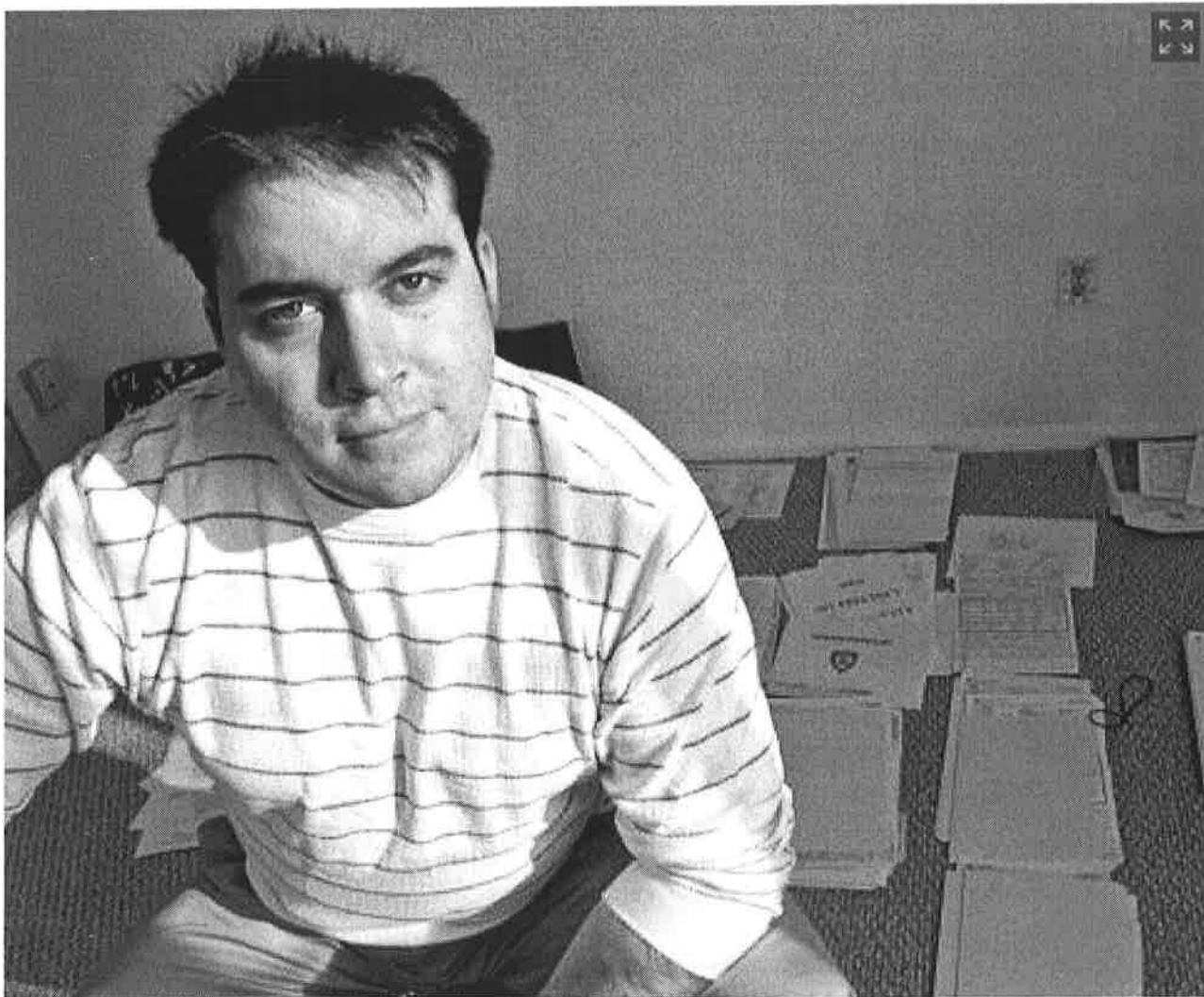
And the allegations came from one of the precinct's officers.

Officer Adrian Schoolcraft shared his suspicions with the Internal Affairs Bureau and the Quality Assurance Division, the NYPD unit responsible for maintaining the integrity of crime stats.

Schoolcraft told The News the top brass are so concerned with numbers that one precinct lieutenant is known as "The Shredder" because he's often spotted destroying documents.

NYPD Deputy Commissioner Paul Browne confirmed the Quality Assurance Division probe. Other police sources confirmed both investigations.

"We have received these complaints, and Quality Assurance has undertaken a review. These complaints are being reviewed as to whether or not this is true



BENJAMIN FOR NEWS

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and whether this was done as a matter of error or intentionally," Browne said.

Schoolcraft gave The News the names of 14 crime victims from notes he took at the precinct from late 2008 to October 2009.

In interviews with The News, five crime victims appeared to back up Schoolcraft's allegations.

Of the remaining nine, four could not be reached, three believed cops responded correctly to their crimes and two initially told The News they had problems with the precinct but could not be reached for further clarification.

Brooklyn mom Marbel Rentas said she was happy with 81st Precinct cops after her son was robbed of his Sidekick phone on a basketball court in October. "They didn't arrest no one, but the police drove him home afterward. They

were nice to him," Rentas said. The case, a source said, was correctly classified as a robbery.

The five people who said their cases were mishandled included:

- A man who said he was beaten bloody and robbed - and then told by cops he was the victim of a "lost property" case because he didn't get a good look at the suspects.
- Another man who said he was berated by the precinct's commanding officer, Deputy Inspector Steven Mauriello, for trying to report a stolen car.
- Another stolen car victim who said it took her a month to get a complaint taken - and that happened only when a supervisor realized she was a retired traffic agent.
- An elderly man who said cops would not take a report when he was burglarized, saying there was "no evidence."

- A 65-year-old woman who said she was crying with anger and frustration when she could not get precinct cops to take a report about her stolen car.

"It's just not right," said Schoolcraft, a seven-year member of the NYPD. "They are taking advantage of people. A lot of [crime victims] don't know any better.

"They think this is the way things are done."

Poor work review

Schoolcraft has big problems of his own.

He received a poor work review early last year - his supervisors cited his need for "constant



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supervision" - and was stripped of his gun and put on desk duty in April after telling an NYPD doctor he thought work stress caused his stomach and chest pains.

Schoolcraft did not have any paperwork from his NYPD medical evaluation.

He has been suspended since Halloween, when supervisors said he left work an hour early without permission.

Police went to his Queens home that night to bring him back to the precinct stationhouse, where he faced suspension for going AWOL. Schoolcraft refused to accompany the cops, and the confrontation apparently escalated.

He was deemed unstable and committed to a psychiatric unit at Jamaica Center for more than six days against his will, he said.

It is unclear what happened in those six days or exactly why Schoolcraft was committed. Doctors who examined him at Jamaica Hospital did not respond to requests for comment.

Schoolcraft said he has been unable to obtain his medical records from them.

The NYPD confirmed Schoolcraft was taken to Jamaica Hospital and admitted for psychiatric observation.

"We don't comment on medically related issues," said NYPD Inspector Edward Mullen.

A person familiar with a psychiatric assessment of Schoolcraft done after his release from the hospital said the officer is perhaps too naive and idealistic but does not appear to be unbalanced.

CRIME RATE IN THE 81st PRECINCT

	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009
MURDER	14	15	12	12	20	16	13
RAPE	26	28	20	22	17	10	10
ROBBERY	413	402	414	409	383	372	320
FELONY ASSAULT	344	339	340	334	306	287	239
BURGLARY	345	320	266	269	284	292	251
GRAND LARCENY	241	266	296	312	364	309	293
GRAND LARCENY AUTO	184	142	136	150	118	106	114
TOTAL	1,567	1,512	1,484	1,508	1,492	1,392	1,240
with change from previous year)		-3.5%	-1.8%	+1.6%	-1%	-6.7%	-10.9%

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"This is not someone talking to himself on the street," the source said. "There's just a naiveté there. He doesn't understand the police culture. Is he insane? Is he psychotic? Is he manic? Absolutely not.

"I think he can be believed."

Schoolcraft has not returned to duty and lives with his father upstate. He insisted the NYPD is trying to make him look bad because of his complaints about the precinct's recordkeeping practices.

Mauriello, the precinct's commanding officer since 2008, called Schoolcraft's allegations "atrocious" before referring all inquiries to the NYPD's press office.

Schoolcraft, a Texas native, joined the NYPD in 2002 because he wanted to

serve after the Sept. 11, 2001, terror attacks.

He was assigned to the 81st Precinct in 2003, and while downgrading felonies was a regular occurrence, he said, it did not "get out of control" until Mauriello took over.

Sharp decline in crime

Over the past two years, the crime rate - a measure of the number of seven major felonies in a precinct - has fallen about 17% in the 81st Precinct, compared with a dip of 12% citywide.

From 2003 to 2007, the rate in the precinct fell at a much smaller pace, and even increased slightly one year.

Schoolcraft faces a department trial on the charges from Halloween- and he has repeatedly refused to report to Police Headquarters to answer those charges.

He has filed a notice of claim with the city controller, indicating he plans to sue the city.

Schoolcraft said he no longer trusts the NYPD, even though he is a reluctant whistleblower.

"I wanted to become a police officer, chase the bad guys, and I thought the NYPD was the best police department in the world," Schoolcraft said.

"I never thought it would turn out like this."

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